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Dao, Li and Dalton education in China

The cultural and historical vision on Dalton Plan in China

Introduction

In a modern Chinese society, similarly to other contemporary countries, since more than one hundred years ago, education stopped being the personal matter of every citizen and became the matter of interests of parents, local governments and ministry of education. Undoubtedly, the way of modern progressive education was highly influenced by a progressive school movement of XXI century, developed among others by Helen Parkhurst, modern American progressive educators, who came to Chi (Elman, 1994) twice: in 1925 and in 1937. The following article will shed a light on the history of transformation on Chinese education and why alternative education became popular in a modern Chinese society taking into account the historical and cultural background on Chinese model of education and the way it is fixed in a new model of Dalton education. The paper will seek to examine the perspective of implementing Dalton education in a modern Chinese Dalton schools.

Despite the rich variety of educational proposals, the contemporary world is becoming more integrated thanks to tools of massive communication, merging of cultures and ideas. Nowadays, one might observe in China the revival of some progressive school developments, such as Montessori, Dalton, Waldorf educational concepts based on differentiation, individualized teaching which are the basis of pedagogical concept created more than one hundred years ago. These educational concepts are the example of a New Education, which gave birth to a different perception of a child and their capacities. The realization of the Dalton Plan principles enables the harmonious and holistic development of every child mainly through a special visual arrangement of an educational space and visualization of educational process. Certainly, the educational success of every child depends mainly on the teacher and their role in Dalton education. The teacher's development of holistic competences, creativity, sensitivity,

emotional and social intelligence. Taking all the factors into account, the following article will seek to examine the historical and cultural background of Dalton education in China, as well as their influence on the implementation of a Dalton model in a modern Chinese society.

Dao and *Li* in Chinese education

In the past, Chinese schools, were under the rule of the Emperor. For example, in the ancient China during the reign of Shang and Zhou dynasties (1800-1050 B.C.E.), schools were founded by Zhou kings for young aristocrats to serve the king. That period, as we find out from "The book of Riots"[1], most of the schools were located near ponds and forests. That period, schools were mostly focused on martial arts and archery. From the Zhou period onwards, the imperial government would have a strong influence on Chinese education. [2] The most important traditions were fixed in "The Book of Riots", which later became five classics of the Confucian Canon. Slowly, the power of central government was given away to local warlords, people who exercised military, economic and political control over the armed forces.

The term "warlords" could also refer to supreme military leader[3]. Although, the educational vision was that period significantly shaped by a military, the Confucianism was never forgotten and stand still strong in people's minds and hearts. Consequently, during Warring States Period, saw the rise of numerous influential philosophies, such as Confucianism, Mohism and Daoism. However, the best implemented in the educational system was undoubtedly Confucianism with long-term impact on state and imperial education. That period, the different schools were often organized into political entities in order to gain social influence. However, one educational institution promoted tolerance, respect, harmonious and holistic development of a child- it was Jixia Academy[4]. In this academy, children were raised in tolerant atmosphere and mutual respect. Consequently, studying in this academy attracted mainly Confucian scholars, who promoted raising children in harmonious environment. Consequently, Confucian way of living became popular in Han Era. It was the era, in which the Emperor Wu of Han made Confucianism a national doctrine. In 124 B.C. "Five classics of Confucianism became the traditional Chinese attitude towards education. The five classics might be described in terms of five visions: metaphysical, political, poetic, social and historical. That vision was clearly

[1] Lee, T. H. C. (2018). Education in Traditional China: A History.

[2] Creel, H. G. (1983). The Origins of Statecraft in China: The Western Chou Empire, pp. 406-9. University of Chicago Press.

[3] Emerson, Ralph Waldo (1902). English traits (1856). London: George Routledge and Sons, p. 168.

[4] Benjamin A. Elman, Alexander Woodside, eds., *Education and Society in Late Imperial China, 1600-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). Scholarly articles.

reflected in the contemporary education and contained anthropological vision on human being, vision on the society, poetic vision on social relations, as well as historical and cultural vision.

Metaphysical vision expressed in the *Yving* reflected *Classic of Changes*[5] combines art, numerology and ethical insight. It described the connection between human being and outer space. The political vision contained the *Shangshu* presented the kingships virtues, such as loyalty, devotion, responsibility and trust. The poetic vision, contained in the *Shijing,* underscores the Confucian valuation of common human feelings. Thus, the basic vision on Chinese ancient society is based on mutual responsiveness. The social vision, contained in the *Liji* shows the society as a community of trust with emphasis on communication. Whereas the historical and cultural vision of the society presented in the *Chunqiu*[6], emphasizes the importance of a collective memory for communal self-identification. Generally, the central place of education in Confucianism is stated in the following passage:

"If a ruler desires to transform the people and perfect their customs, the ruler can only do so through education" (Xueji 1)[7]. The goal of contemporary education was mainly to develop character, critical and creative thinking, introduce life-long learning, love for learning, normative behaviour, commitment to learning as well as self-discipline, in order to educate self-reliant, reflective learner. That shift from top down communication into bottom up was deeply rooted in Confucian vision on education. The learner focused education was highly praised in Confucianism so that human beings can be equipped and empowered to realise and broaden "Dao"(the way of heaven), the gift given to a human from above. To realise Dao is to experience "the vision of human excellence" [8]. In other words, to broaden spiritual, social, moral, political and intellectual capital by every human being. Consequently, Confucius states that learner-driven education is essential for the whole society. He also condemned lock step teaching by saying "teachers chant the texts on the bamboos and advance the teaching rapidly without regard for student's ability to accomplish the learning.." (Ross, 1993) (Cheng, 2005). One might states, that self-reliance and independence are in the heart of ancient Chinese education, natural growth of the talents and skills of children was already significant so many

[5] Xiulan Zhang, ed.,. *China's Education Development and Policy, 1978-2008*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, Social Scientific Studies in Reform Era China, 2011. xix, 480 pp. ISBN 978-90-04-18815-0 Google Books view on WorldCat Translations of articles by specialists in the PRC on policy making; early childhood education; basic education; special education; vocational education; ethnic minority education; private education. (Chan, 2000) (Cua, 1989)

[7] Chan, A.K.L., (2000). Confucian ethics and the critique of ideology. Asian philosophy, 10 (3), 245-261.

[8] Cua, A.S. (1989). The concept of Li in Confucian modern theory, p.209-235, Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.

centuries ago. Certainly, the concept of Dao needs to be agreeable with Li, which symbolized norms and ethics. In other words, freedom and responsibility were mentioned in ancient Confucian education centuries ago. Confucian education was also fostering reflection and inferential thinking by engaging "enlightening approach":

"I do not enlighten a person, who is not striving to understand, I do not provide the words to the person who is not already struggling to speak. If I have raised one corner and the person does not come back with the other three corners, I will not teach that person again…" [10] As one may see, students were expected to make their deductions and judgements themselves.
Reflection and learning are closely interwind: "Learning (xue) without reflection (si) leads to bewilderment. Reflection without learning leads to perilousness" [11]. In other words, person who learns without reflection, will never understand what they have learned. Consequently, engaging reflection in education, encourages to deepen "Dao"- inner talents, abilities and skills. Dao can be however only deepen by the child, never by a teacher. Teacher's role was only to show the right direction, it is a child who decides what they see. Teacher's role was to guide student step- by step through the conversation or asking questions. It was not about serving a ready answer. Besides using the questioning technique, a Chinese student was to take an active part in peer learning. To achieve this, the strategy of "Xiangfan" or mutual observation recommended by Xueji XI. The strategy was all about engaging "mutual observation"[9] that refers to students learning from each other through pair or group work, so as in a modern progressive movement of the beginning of XX century, including Dalton Plan. As one can analyse the idea of socialization and presence of culture of mutual learning was already present in the DNA of a Chinese Confucian education. Confucian perspective on education are present not only in China, but also in South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Taipei. One can firmly state that it survived until today, since one might observe a real revival of an alternative education movement, such as Dalton Plan based on independency, freedom and responsibility, cooperation, evaluation and reflection, peer learning, persistence, self-discipline.

Confucianism, during the decades became strongly rooted in Chinese education. Of course, through this period of times, education was a privilege of the elites. Naturally, common people

[10] [9] Li, C. *The Tao encounters the west: Explorations in contemporary philosophy.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999. Ames, R.T., and Rosemont H., The Analects of Confucius: a philosophical translation. New York, Ballantine Books.

[11] Ibidem, p.234.

were to obey the rules as well. During Han dynasty the first civil exam was set up. Confucianism, with no surprise was one of the key subjects to study for the civil service exam. During that time provincial schools were established countrywide and Confucianism was spread all over the country. Some changes had been made through thousands year history, during Qing dynasty, more western influences started to appear in Chinese system of education. During the Opium War (1840-1842), scholars and government officials introduced major restructure of educational system. New study areas appeared, such as foreign languages or science and technology. In 1911 after Qing dynasty was overthrown by the revolution, and republican form of government was established the traditional way of education was abandoned[10].

Western philosophy started to be more popular not earlier than in 1919. That was the year when John Dewey went to Asia with series of lectures. That was the period when new educational models from Europe, Japan, USA have been established. These models include among others, the Dalton Plan from USA [11].

Therefore, in what way was the Dalton Plan implemented in the Chinese vision on human being, society and ethics? Was the Dalton Plan close to the contemporary culture and politics? In what way was the Dalton Plan implemented? The following paragraph will try seek to examine the questions. Let's however start first with the visit of John Dewey and Helen Parkhurst in China.

Dalton Plan in in the perspective of Confucian vision

American progressive education of the beginning of twentieth century was growing enormously across the world. The progressive movement gave birth among others to Dalton education, which was spread across the world. In twenties and thirties of XX century Dalton Plan was already in America, England, Poland, Germany, the Netherlands, Japan and China. One of the greatest progressive educators were among others John Dewey, however Helen Parkhurst was one of the most successful one. With her book "Education on the Dalton Plan" she introduced effective way of school work accompanied by child cantered vision on

[10] Heidi A. Ross, *China Learns English: Language Teaching and Social Change in the People's Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993)

[11] Cheng Li, *Bridging Minds across the Pacific: U.S.-China Educational Exchanges, 1978-2003* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2005)

education. The effective way of school work was naturally the reflection of a contemporary American society. It was the age of steam and rapid economic growth. The schools containing social laboratories, in which the potential of the students is encouraged was similar to the vision on the whole society of that era.

That vision was soon spread into educational systems of numerous schools across the world. John Dewey, as a first American progressive educator visited China in 1919. Firstly, he went with series of lectures to Japan, where he was invited at the Imperial University in Tokyo and the number of other points in the Japanese Empire[12]. He however decided to extend his journey by going also to China, at least for four weeks, before coming back to United States. He was that period lecturing and conferring to take some of the story of a western democracy to an Ancient Empire. The early global movement of progressive education ideas was not revolutionary, but they became associated with revolutionary movements. John Dewey was not a political revolutionary and his educational vision was never meant to create rebellion. When Dewey lectured in China, he introduced ideas about basing education on the interest of the child, the social construction of the curriculum, learning by doing, the use of social imagination and educating children for participation in the society. By the time Dewey left China in 1921, he had given 78 lectures [13]. Mainly in Beijing, Nanjing, Hangzhou, Shanghai, Guangzhou and other places. His students Hu Shi and Tao Xingzhi were his translators. At the time of his departure 100.000 copies of his Peking lectures were in circulation. Dewey's visit was sponsored by China's Society for the promotion of New Education, which used his ideas for the promotion of New Education. In part, this organization was responsible for the Chinese Government School Reform Decree of 1922 [14], which adopted the American school model of six years of elementary school: three years of junior high school and three years of high school. However, when Dewey returned from China in 1922, he was full of doubts on having meaningful impact on Chinese education. As he writes:

[12] Dewey, J., Dewey A. Ch., *Letters from China and Japan*, New York E,P. Dutton and Company 681 Fifth Avenue, 1920, p.2-10.
[13] Spring J. *Globalization of Education,* Routledge New York and London, 2015, p.146-148.
[14] Ibidem, 150.

"The difficulties in the way of a practical extension and regeneration of Chinese education are all but insuperable. Discussion often ends in an impasse: no political reform of China without education, but no development of schools as long as self-interest will take place…."[15]

In the 1920 s Dalton education began to enter China. At that time, the secondary schools were adopting the Dalton Plan. In October 1922 the first Dalton experimental class in China was established at the Chinese Public School (now Wusong Middle School) in Shanghai[16].

Wusong Middle School Gate in 1922, Source: Weixin W., Chinese Dalton Guide, Dalton Education, Beijing 2022.

It is worth paying attention to the fact that the experiment with Dalton in that school created a background for Chinese modern education reform. Hu Shi, the President of Pekin University was a student of John Dewey.

Source: Hu Shi, December 23, 1952, Weixin W., Chinese Dalton Guide, Dalton Education, Beijing 2022.

Shi was highly influenced by Helen Parkhurst practical vision and John Dewey philosophy. Soon, Hu Shi as the headmaster of Chinese Public Schools applied teachings of John Dewey

[15] Anthony G. Pacciano, *The great American education*, New York Routledge, 2013, p.22-23.
[16] Weixin W., Chinese Dalton Guide, Dalton Education, Beijing University Press, Beijing (Xie Changfa, 2020)2022.

in some public schools in China. That time, Hu Shi, together with other headmaster of public school Shu Xincheng, introduced Dalton Plan as an "Educational Experiment "and boldly tried new educational reforms in Chinese Public Schools. By implementing the five year ability grouping system and elective system, setting up separate classrooms and coeducation. The schools in China in 1922s allowed students to freely choose subjects according to their interests and abilities.

Source: Weixin W., Chinese Dalton Guide, Dalton Education, Beijing 2022. John Dewey and Hu Shi.

Was therefore John Dewey successful in China? Was his vision warmed welcome? Probably, it did, but certainly it was influenced by the political situation of that period. Did Dewey awaken the Confucian vision? Apparently, the education started to change, and Helen Parkhurst decided to continue the mission of John Dewey. Helen Parkhurst visited China twice. First time in 1925 and in 1937 [17].

The main goals of her visit was mainly to spread Dalton Plan outside her school. To make it known across the world. In order to achieve this, she gave series of lectures. In 1937 Parkhurst visited Hangzhou, Nanjing and Beijing. In 1925 she visited among others Shanghai, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Wuhan, Beijing and other Chinese cities. The educational impact of Helen Parkhurst lectures in China was enormous. It raise again the interest in child centred vision on education. Was it the moment that Confucian vision on education was reborn in the heart of the Chinese? Was the vision of the Dalton Plan so far from the Confucian perspective on human being?

[17] Xie Changfa, Zxou Ying, *The Dalton Plan in China: The chronicles of Helen Parkhurst Activities in 1925*, Journal of East China Normal University, Educational Sciences number 12, 2020.

When we speak about Dao- natural awakening of children's strengths and Li- the responsibility and social norms children need to follow. Is it far away from Parkhurst's Dalton vision?

Source: Xie Changfa, Zxou Ying, *The Dalton Plan in China: The chronicles of Helen Parkhurst Activities in 1925*, Journal of East China Normal University, Educational Sciences number 12, 2020.

Certainly, the speeches of Parkhurst enliven the social experiments on Dalton Plan: children's self-reliance, freedom and responsibility was reintroduces in educational culture again. In 1921, the Dalton education was introduced in China. That period, the south east coast of China experimented with the implementation of the new model of education. However, Dewey's and Parkhurst influence has declined since 1927 due to the political situation. After a long time of absence, the first two decades of XXI century brought the alternative education back to China. It was caused mainly by dissatisfaction of parents from the currently existing system of education. State-run education system is based mainly on rote learning and limited critical and creative thinking. Instead, parents decided to choose independently-run schools such as Waldorf, Montessori, Reggio Emilia or Dalton[18]. These schools are perceived by Chinese parents as those with "softer learning environment". Some parents say that alternative education schools offer a healthier education and are more focused on a well being and cooperation rather than on unhealthy competition and urge to be the best, to fulfil the ambitions of some parents, teachers. In alternative schools in China, the bonds between teachers and

[18] Waldorf, Montessori boom in (Nylander, 2014)China - CNN

children, children and children and headmasters play a crucial role. From this basis, further cognitive, spiritual development is built. In a traditional school, what matter the most are the final exam/test results. On the other hand, without doubts Chinese education has gained the world's attention for outstanding academic performance.

Thus, the question is: can we "copy and paste" a ready model of alternative education? If not, what factors and cultural differences need to be taken into account while implementing the Dalton model? In what way five cultural dimensions are fit into the Dalton model? What is the modern Chinese vision on Dalton from Shenzhen and Wenzhou International Dalton Schools? Are Dao and Li still present in a modern Chinese education? And finally, how does the Dalton Plan look like when east meets west?

In a further part of the article I will try to answer these questions.

When east meets west..

When East meets west forum in 2019 in Wenzhou Dalton International School with the presence of Dalton International board and experts, photo: Caroline Zhang, Wenzhou Dalton International School.

Analysing both approaches to education, there is no doubt that each system has their own characteristics. It includes difference in learning style, assessment, extracurricular and family education, but also the differences in Dalton Plan implementation. It is mainly caused by cultural differences between western and eastern attitude to life and education. In order to understand deeper the cultural differences and nuances, it is necessary to analyse five

dimensions of national culture identified by Hofstede and their relation and influence in Chinese, modern education. [19] These are as follows:

- Power Distance Index (PDI)
- Individualism vs. Collectivism (IDV)
- Masculinity vs. femininity (MAS)
- Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)
- Long Term Orientation (LTO)[22]

(Huib, The 7 Mental Images of National Culture, leading and Managing in a globalized world, 2019)

The above listed dimensions have an enormous impact on education. They influence the culture of both teaching and learning. It includes the attitude of teachers, students as well as educational goals. It is however necessary to analyse in what way five dimensions of culture influence education in China and contradict this analysis with Dalton education in order to realize how far Dalton education and philosophy is from traditional Chinese school.

The first dimension, **Power Distance Index (PDI)[20]** is the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept the fact that power is distributed unequally. In a Chinese society, the Power Distance is relatively high (80). That means that everybody has their right place in the society and status is important. The reflection of PDI in Chinese education that means that:

- Students expect teachers to initiate communication
- They may never contradict or criticize teacher
- Children expect the ready schedules, outlines, paths
- Efficiency of education depends on excellence of the teacher
- Lockstep teaching is the main way of teaching

In Dalton education:

- Children are free to initiate tasks, conversations, etc.

[19] Wursten H., Jacobs C., The impact of culture on education across countries, can we introduce the best practices in education across countries?, Hofstede 2022.
[22] Ibidem, p. 6.
[20] Wursten, Huib, *The 7 mental Images of National Culture, Leading and Managing in a globalized world*, Hofstede Insights, 2019.

- They are free to confront or challenge a teacher, if necessary;
- Children are expected to set their own goals and ways of executing them;
- Efficiency perceived as a aim of organizational reform of education (when organization means: class management, learning resources, didactics, learning environment).
- Child-cantered education rather than teacher cantered education.

When analysing **Individualism vs. Collectivism**[21], it might be observed that in individualistic cultures such as western culture, individuals take care of each other. In collectivistic culture, such as Asian, people belong to "in groups", who look after them expecting loyalty. In collectivist culture communication matters more than verbal communication. In Chinese education, that means that:

- Only teacher may initiate student's speaking, expressing opinions
- Students only communicate in small, homogenous groups
- "Losing face" of both child and teacher must never happen

In Dalton education however:

- Child is always welcome to initiate conversation, expressing opinions
- Children mostly communicate in heterogenous groups
- ''Face consciousness" is weak, mistake is a part of learning and part of life, not the reason of "losing one's face".

Furthermore, through analysis of **Masculinity, vs. Femineity**, one may notice that masculine cultures typical for China or Japan, the most significant factors are successfulness, victory and triumph. In feminine culture, on the contrary. Most important are well-being, looking after each other, cooperation rather than competition. In Chinese education it is reflected in a following way:

- The students with strongest intellectual potential are very often role models and patterns to follow
- Summative assessment is widely used
- Mistake or failure is significantly damage the "self-image" of a child

[21] Ibidem, p. 158.

- Children choose subjects for career reasons

In Dalton education:

- All children are excellent, every child is special, every voice matters;
- Formative assessment rather than summative assessment;
- Committing mistake is a part of everyday life, self-development and self-awareness;
- Children choose those learning fields, in which they are most interested in.

Taking into analysis **Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)**, it is crucial to research extent to which individuals feel threatened by uncertainty. In cultures, where there is a strong uncertainty avoidance, such as Poland, Japan or Netherlands, there is a strong emotional need for having rules and regulations, also schedules. The need for structures life is significantly high. That attitude is clearly visible in education as well. Whereas in countries, where UAI is weak, the practitioners point of view is highly respected. Naturally, both approaches are clearly visible in education. Therefore:

In Chinese traditional education:

- Children feel safe in structures learning situations';
- Teachers expect to have all the answers;
- Good teachers operate with academic language;
- Children are appreciated for their accuracy;
- Intellectual disagreement is perceived as "personal disloyalty"[22]

Whereas in Dalton education:

- Children are comfortable in structured learning situations with contracts, assignments, deadlines;
- Teachers do not have to know all the answers;
- Good pedagogues use a plain language;
- Children are appreciated for their creativity, freedom in thinking, innovative ideas;
- Pedagogues perceive intellectual disagreement as challenging and stimulating.

[22] Wursten H., Jacobs C., The impact of culture on education across countries, can we introduce the best practices in education across countries?, p.5-9, Hofstede 2022.

Long Term Orientation is the extent to which a particular society demonstrates future proof activities rather than focusing on new term point of view. It has to do with monotheistic religions, e.g. Christian, Islamic, Jewish, etc. Individuals raised in monotheistic countries believe in one universal truth, one absolute. These are, e.g. : USA, West Europe. Whereas in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong individuals believe that truth is an ambiguous matter, since it depends on numerous factors, such as: context, time, situation.

Transferring these issues on educational ground, one might observe in Chinese traditional school:

- Focus is on "How";
- One solution to the problem is more likely;
- Perseverance and self-discipline immensely significant virtues;
- Education as "duty"

In Anglo-Saxon culture, Dalton education:

- Focus on "why";
- Numerous solutions to the problem are possible;
- Stability perceived as the most important virtue[23].

Undoubtedly, all above mentions factors are clearly reflected in the traditional Chinese model of education. Certainly, it is worth mentioning that didactically, traditional schools in China differ much from Dalton schools and western model of education. These differences are visible in "how" children interact with each other, teacher and outside world. It is visible in "how" children learn the new material, the way they solve problems, the way they express themselves.

For example, In Chinese education, rote learning plays a significant role. A distinctive role of memorization is much explicit nowadays. In a traditional Chinese school, the teacher is a leader, who gives lectures for the whole lesson period. The top down communication is a basic form

[23] Wursten H., Jacobs C., The impact of culture on education across countries, can we introduce the best practices in education across countries?, p.5-8, Hofstede 2022.

of communication in a typical Chinese school. Practical activities are not popular at schools, children are focused on copying rather than searching for original, creative ideas. Note taking and repetition is typical for the Chinese school. There is a little room for debates, discussions and practice so that children can apply what they have learned in a real life situation. Giving children "real life experience" as Parkhurst say does not exist in a traditional school in China, the focus is mainly on a paper work. Dalton Plan offers schools a children led education, whereas in China one may observe teacher guided classrooms, where teachers is speaking and child listens, occasionally taking notes from a "lecture". From the analysis of five cultural dimensions, one may conclude that that it is "rude" to disagree with the teacher, to have their own opinion or to challenge teacher. Western way of learning is just the opposite, Dalton Schools, the class is driven by the child, not the teacher. Thus, most of the Dalton Schools motto is "I am not led, I lead..". Assessment in China is all about exams. It is since the grade is the most effective way of assessing child's knowledge. Although in Dalton Schools in China, formative assessment is more and more popular, however in traditional schools it is still absent. As a matter of fact, shaping children's strengths and talents (*Confucian Dao*) is mainly absent. The focus is on getting as high score as possible in order to get to a chosen university or to have a brighter future. It is because College entrance examination in China "Gaoko" is different than western sort of final examinations. Apart from only scores, there are also requirements.
It is however important to say that Chinese students are very self-disciplined, with a strong sense of perseverance, they are ambitious and very hard working with a strong sense of responsibility (Confucian *Li*). Thus, numerous students in China take up extracurricular classes. In western countries mainly those children who struggle take an extra-curricular. For others, they only take up extracurricular classes based on their interest, just like in Dalton schools.

Generally speaking, one may call traditional Chinese way of education as "cramming education." It means that teacher crams the knowledge to children, while child is only listening. Reflection, planning, self-organization, responsibility, independence, mutual learning are not there. Confucian model of ancient education seemed to disappear. In this situation, is child cantered education present in China?

The answer is yes. Nowadays we may observe a true revival of alternative schools such as Dalton Schools, Montessori Schools, Waldorf Schools (a school in Jinjiang, Chengdu, first Waldorf school in China). Currently Montessori International have affiliated societies in China, which is in Zheijang Montessori Institute of child development, five training centres (Beijing,

Chongging, Peninsula, Hanghzou, Taipei and five International Montessori schools (Suzho, Beijing, Shanghai, Taiwan, Hong Kong)[24]. Dalton International is guiding currently two International Dalton Schools in China: in Shenzhen and Wenzhou as well as Chinese Department of Dalton International with the strong connection with local educational bureaus, Ministry of Education and North East Normal University in Changhun [26]. How does the implementation of the process of daltonizing school look like in China? (Rohner, 2020) What activities need to be undertaken in order to change the shift of work from the teacher to a student? How to find Dao and Li nowadays?

From my experience as a coach in both Shenzhen and Wenzhou Dalton Schools, I analysed that the ground values in implementation the Dalton influence are mainly strong sense of perseverance and self-discipline. These values undoubtedly shape a strong sense of responsibility. Both teachers and children are ambitious and hardworking, what makes the implementation of Dalton Plan smooth. However, the way of realizing the Dalton Plan mixed with Chinese spirit will absolutely have another face in China than in The Netherlands, Norway or Finland. In order to observe what are the most important factors in Dalton Plan implementation in both schools, together with the group of mentors and Dalton coordinators from both Shenzhen and Wenzhou we have worked out the following model:

DALTON INFLUENCE IN CHINA

Self-discipline and perseverance

"It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop."[25]

In our school we praise hard work and we do our best to reach our goal.

[24] Dalton International

Endurance, Patience and hard work (Confucius)

堪
性

In our school we work hard to accomplish an ambition, we do not give up easily.

Nobility and fearlessness (Confucius)

"The Noble Person has neither anxiety nor fear."

In our school we are not afraid of making mistakes, making mistake is our best lesson. Therefore our school provide the culture of “try” and “try again”

Gratitude and generativity

感激

We praise thankfulness and appreciation to one another by promoting positive attitudes and meaningful relationships.

Freedom and Responsibility (Dao and Li)

We create the environment in which we stimulate self-action of children. Responsibility induces experience and experience induces learning.

Sociality (affiliation) and Mutual responsiveness

We communicate effectively, appropriately and sensitively with others, we demonstrate interaction of a group life based on mutual trust and respect.

Self-determination and ownership

In our school we create environment in which intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are in balance. We demonstrate competence, relatedness and autonomy. We set goals and monitors progress towards meeting them.

Efficiency and enterprising living and working

We demonstrate an efficient education with Dalton Plan as an “efficiency measure”. *Efficiency* is the goal of organization in our school.

Emotional self-regulation and well-being

We demonstrate diverse strategies to engage physical and emotional wellbeing by creating an atmosphere of positive mutual relations.

Intercultural Competence and Citizenship

We demonstrate openness and curiosity about diverse cultures, children are aware of their social roles and responsibilities

Reflection and experience

“Learning without reflection is a waste. Reflection without learning is dangerous.”

In our school we engage reflection and reflect practice to better understand each other, ourselves and the purpose of our learning. It involves both social and individual experience.

From the above model, it can be analysed that Confucian spirit is still in the heart of Chinese education. Dalton Plan seems to be in harmony with Confucian values and virtues. Thus, it is crucial to state that "copy and paste" a "ready to use" Dalton Plan is impossible. Every school is different, in every culture and country Dalton approach will have another sound. Therefore, one cannot speak about one, correct paradigm suitable to all educational and cultural situations. The plurality of perspectives doesn't mean that one is exceptionally privileged and what some educators and scholars perceive as "the only right model" cannot be justified in a larger scale. Consequently, we need to ask ourselves a question what is Dalton education? If it is no system, no method without limits then we can easily adjust it to the particular cultural and political situation, then it is nothing but an enrichment of Dalton Plan and Helen Parkhurst worldwide legacy, from which I am convinced, she would be extremely proud of.

Conclusion

Nowadays, alternative education in China is an enormous social movement. One may say, it is coming back to deeply rooted Confucian values and virtues. The internet is full of numerous educational proposals from the field of alternative education in China. Contrary to the beginnings of the development of the Dalton schools in China after the First World War, and dominating them by national schools, the beginning of XX1 Century had a diversity and plurality of concepts, visions, ideas for education and bringing up children. The last three decades in China are therefore numerous trials of searching "a good education" and "effective education". The enormous role in that process was played by local educational bureaus, parents, local city authorities, school unions. Their involvement in renewing Dalton education in China, allowed to create teacher training centres, department, research centres of among others, Dalton education. These valuable initiatives allowed to develop safe, non-traumatizing, holistic, child centred educational structure with the aim of supporting every young human being, no matter his/her educational past. The lifestyle preferred in Chinese, alternative schools is constructed around a child- a subject. That means that that the school teaches, respect of every child, co-constructing the school life and their unique climate, less rigorous organization of a school work, more freedom in selecting the content of curriculum, more natural cognition and real life experience based on social constructivism. These factors enables the natural growth of every child, awakening creative attitudes. This a an extremely hard task taken into account the educational past of the children, who until now followed lockstep teaching.

A crucial element of participation in Dalton education is an aware choice made by both parents and children. However, still in numerous cases there is a financial barrier between private, elitaire Dalton schools and public schools.

Chinese Dalton schools, contrary to "main stream schools" do not order one correct role model, lifestyle or patterns to follow. Instead, Dalton schools create conditions to individual construction of knowledge, experience. The basis of relations between human beings in these schools is dialogue. Both children and teachers together are in charge of norms necessary to "live together" as well as creating a space of "children's freedom" such as Study Lab in Wenzhou Dalton International School.

It is crucial to state that Dalton education in China plays a special role in social life. First of all, it provides child centred education, takes care of holistic development of every small human being, it prevents from standardization of knowledge, norms, growing competitiveness. Parental decision about resigning from national education in a traditional Chinese school are taken up usually as a result of a bad previous educational experience.

In a Chinese social reality, both students and parents may choose: to enter already existing social norms and patterns, such as currently existing traditional schools or to choose alternative schools, such as Dalton schools, where every small human being may individually construct their lifetime experience.

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